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REMARKS:

Claims 2, 4, 12, and 14 have been canceled without prejudice.

Claims 1, 3, 5-11, 13, and 15-20 are pending in the application.

The Office objected to the drawings as they do not contain the reference numeral 64a found in paragraph [0033] of the specification. Paragraph [0033] has been re-written now to state that the recess 62 has a surface 64 formed as a reverse angle shoulder adapted to engage and rest on a similarly angled surface 65 on the annular projection 60, which is consistent with the remaining disclosure and drawings. In addition, claims 9 and 19 have been amended now to reflect the amendments to this paragraph. No new matter has been added. Applicants believe that these amendments now render moot this objection to the drawings, and respectfully request this objection be withdrawn.

The Office objected to the drawings as they contain the reference character(s) RF which are not mentioned in the description. 'RF' is known terminology for "rig floor" as indicated, for example, in US Patent 6,386,283. Since 'RF' and reference numeral 12 both indicate different areas of the same object in Figure 1, paragraph [0018] has been amended now to include RF with reference numeral 12 as being the rig floor, which is consistent with the remaining disclosure. No new matter has been added. Applicants believe that this amendment now renders moot this objection to the drawings, and respectfully request this objection be withdrawn.

The Office objected to the drawings as they do not indicate the slight axial spacing between the projection and a groove surface in the joint, as described in the specification. Claims 9 and 19 have been amended now to delete this phrase. No new matter has been added. Applicants believe that these amendments now render moot this objection to the drawings, and respectfully request this objection be withdrawn.

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The Office objected to the disclosure, paragraph [0034], because one of the surfaces is given reference numeral 70, when the disclosure describes 70 as associated with an elevator. Paragraph [0034] has been amended now to correctly indicate the surface as numeral 69, which is consistent with the remaining disclosure. No new matter has been added. Applicants believe that these amendments now render moot this objection to the disclosure, and respectfully request this objection be withdrawn.

The Office objected to claims 1, 2, 10-12, 16, 19, because of informalities. In response, claims 1 and 11 have been amended now to say: --a plurality of large diameter pipe joints--; claims 1 and 11 have also been amended to include the limitations of original claims 2 and 12 and to say --secured-- in place of "clamped", as the term "secured" has already been introduced. Claims 10 and 20 have been amended now say --as the collar--; claim 16 has been amended now to include the word --of-- between "plurality" and "lifting"; and the number 11 has been removed from the end of claim 19.

The Office rejected claims 1, 2, 5, 7, 11, 12, 15, and 17 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by US Patent 6,361,251 to Soltanahmadi, et al.

The Office rejected claims 1, 5, 11 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by US Patent 6,349,764 to Adams, et al.

The Office rejected claims 1, 5, 6, 15 and 16 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by US Patent 3,063,509 to Guier.

The Office also rejected claims 2, 3, 8, 12, 13, and 18 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Adams, et al. in view of Soltanahmadi, et al.

Claims 4, 9, 10, 14, 19, and 20 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

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Responsive to all the rejections and objections listed above, claims 1 and 11 have been re-written now to include all the limitations of original dependent claims 4 and 14 respectively and those of intervening claims 2 and 12 respectively. Accordingly original claims 2, 4, 12 and 14 have been canceled. Furthermore, dependent claims 3, 7, 13, and 13 have been amended now to depend, respectively, from their amended independent claims.

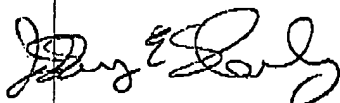
Applicants believe that claims 1 and 11, as amended, are now allowable and respectfully request allowance of these claims.

Applicants believe that since claims 3, 5-10, 13, and 15-20, depend from allowable base claims 1 or 11, these claims are also allowable, and respectfully request allowance of these claims as well.

In view of the amendments and arguments made herein, Applicants respectfully submit that the application is now in condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case.

Please charge Deposit Account No. 180584 in the amount of \$120, the fee required under 37 CFR 1.17(a)(1) for a one month extension for time. It is believed that there are no other fees due at this time. However, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees which may be required at any time during the prosecution of this application without specific authorization, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account 180584. If there are any questions concerning the above, please contact the undersigned at (281) 878-5658.

Respectfully submitted,



Jeffery B. Daly
Reg. No. 44,640
Grant Prideco, L.P.
400 N. Sam Houston Prkwy East
Suite 900

Houston, TX 77060

Ph: 281-878-5658

Fax: 281-878-5720

e-mail: jeffery.daly@grantprideco.com

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